

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

OMB-01 ACDA-19 IO-12 RSR-01 /124 W
----- 065548

R 301546 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0130

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

UNCLAS LONDON 03747

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT OVERWHELMINGLY APPROVED WHITE
PAPER ON ULSTER

REF: LONDON'S 3702

1. AT THE CONCLUSION OF A TWO- DAY DEBATE, THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OVERWHELMINGLY APPROVED THE GOVERNMENT'S WHITE PAPER ON NI. THE VOTE WAS 329-5, WITH ENOCH POWELL AMONG THOSE OPPOSING, AND ALMOST HALF THE MEMBERSHIP ABSENT. AN AMENDMENT REGRETTING THAT NORTHERN IRELAND IS INADEQUATELY REPRESENTED AT WESTMINSTER (IT HAS ONLY 12 MPS INSTEAD OF THE 20 ITS POPULATION WOULD PROPORTIONALLY ENTITLE IT TO), WAS DEFEATED 332-13.

2. DURING THE DEBATE, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND WILLIAM WHITELAW PROMISED TO " CONSIDER MOST CAREFULLY" THE REQUEST BY LABOR SPOKESMAN MERLYN REES THAT A WAY BE FOUND TO ENABLE SINN FEIN TO CONTEST THE ELECTIONS FOR THE NEW NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY (SEE REFTEL). PRIME MINISTER HEATH, HOWEVER, IN A TV INTERVIEW THAT SAME EVENING, EXPRESSED STRONG DOUBT
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THAT SINN FEIN COULD PARTICIPATE UNLESS IT RENOUNCED VIOLENCE. AGREEING TO A CEASEFIRE, HE INDICATED, WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH.

3. A NUMBER OF SPEAKERS, INCLUDING HAROLD WILSON URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO POSTPONE THE NI LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 30 UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS FOR THE PROPOSED NEW ASSEMBLY HAVE BEEN HELD. WHITELAW EXPRESSED RELUCTANCE TO DO SO, BUT AGREED TO HAVE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE IDEA.

4. WHITELAW CAME IN FOR WIDESPREAD PRAISE FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE HOUSE FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AS SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND AND FOR BRINGING FORTH THE WHITE PAPER.

ANNENBERG

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*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

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